India and China have agreed to work towards development of mutually beneficial relations in all areas and to focus on imparting greater economic and technolgical content to bilateral relations. Bilateral trade has reached US $ 1.4 billion in 1996. There are more than 50 joint ventures between the two sides. In recent years, India and China have expanded functional cooperation exchanges in diverse fields. The next meeting of the Joint Economic Group and the Sub Group on Science & Technology between India and China is expected to be convened later this year.

Harassment of Maid Servants

*309. SHRI T. GOVINDAN :
PROF. P.J. KURIEN :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) the number of maid-servants from India working in gulf countries;

(b) whether Government have received complaints of physical, mental and even sexual torture of these maid servants;

(c) if so, the number of such complaints received during the last one year;

(d) the action taken by the Government on these complaints; and

(e) the steps the Government propose to take to ensure the safety of these maid servants?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) to (e) The exact number of Indian maid servants working in Gulf countries at any given moment would be difficult to calculate, as after obtaining emigration clearance, they neither register themselves with Missions/Posts on arrival nor on departure from the country of employment. However, the exact number of house maids who were given emigration clearance by the Ministry of Labour over the last three years is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

Mission-wise number of complaints received from maid servants working in Gulf countries during the last one year is given in the attached statement. The complaints mostly relate to non-payment or delayed payment of wages, long and arduous hours of work without adequate compensation, denial of leave to come to India, withholding of travel documents by sponsors, non-fulfilment of contractual obligations, ill-treatment, etc. There have been a few complaints of sexual harassment also.

Whenever Missions/Posts receive complaints from maid servants, they promptly take up the matter with the sponsor/employer to settle the matter. Wherever necessary, the matter is taken up with the concerned authorities of the foreign Governments to pursuade the employer to redress the grievances. When no solution is possible despite the best efforts of the Missions/ Posts, all assistance is given to facilitate repatriation of the aggrieved maid servants.

To prevent possible abuse, those below of the age of 40 years are not given emigration clearance to take-up jobs abroad as house maids. Moreover, it is also obligatory that agreements pertaining to the recruitment of house maids be duly attested by the concerned Indian Mission for getting emigration clearance.

Statement

Number of Complanis received by Missions in Gulf countries during last one year

	Mission in	No. of complaints
1.	United Arab Emirates	24
2.	Iraq	Nil
3.	Bahrain	74
4.	Saudi Arabia	190
5.	Oman	97
6.	Kuwait	850
7.	Yemen	4
8.	Qatar	216

Hepatitis-C

*310. DR. VALLABHBHAI KATHIRIA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have issued notification for making the screening of Hepatitis-C mandatory for all blood donations from July 1, 1997;

(b) if so, whether the Government had adequate stock of kits for supplying to all Central, State and other non-Governmental organisations who are maintaining blood banks in the country before the issues of the notification;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the further steps the Government propose to take in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) The feasibility of inclusion of mandatory screening of blood for Hepatitis-C requires an indepth deliberations among experts from the field of Transfusion medicine and Administrators, to have a technical and economic analysis and to work out a time schedule. Till such time HCV testing of blood will remain voluntary.